

Private and Public Decisions of the Walloon Consistories in the United Provinces of the Netherlands

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Abstract

The “Livre Synodal” is a book in which the affairs that the synods in the Dutch Republic dealt with. The particular one under consideration here collects the affairs dealt by the Synods of the Huguenot (French-speaking Calvinist communities) Churches, or by their more renowned name – Walloon Churches. The author, based on the “Livre Synodal”, examines in this article as a source for the study for early modern privacy. Based on two case studies, that of De La Rouille in Middelburg and Huguenin in Leiden and Wesel, the author assesses the perspectives of privacy existing in them, and analyses them through the prism of the so-called heuristic zones of privacy.

Keywords: privacy, early modern history, Huguenots, Walloon Churches, Dutch Republic

Historical background

The difficult relationship between the Reformed Calvinists, so-called Huguenots, and the Catholic authorities of France, which became more and more turbulent from 1550s onwards, reached its boiling point in 1572, when during the St Barthelemy Day Massacre ca. 3000 Huguenots were murdered in Paris alone, and many more throughout the country. As a result of this violence, thousands of Huguenots fled, in what later became known as the “first wave refugees” to the United Provinces of the Netherlands or the so-called Dutch Republic, country which at the time was amidst its revolt against the Spanish rule.¹ The Spaniards were fierce Catholics, and although initially

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¹ Yardeni, *Le Refuge Protestant*.

Author's original version

William I of Orange, the Stadtholder of Holland, and the head of the uprising, did not emphasise the importance of the religious component in this war, this became more and more important to justify it by positioning the Reformed faith against Catholicism of the bloody rule of the Spanish Crown.²

Already in mid-sixteenth century, French speaking Calvinists, from the Catholic south of the Dutch provinces, were migrating into the northern, predominantly Reformed provinces. They became known as the “Walloon”, due to the name of the region from which they came. They established their own Reformed churches, the so-called “Walloon Churches”, where the language of worship was French.

The Dutch Reformed Church, which became the privileged religion of the Dutch Republic or the so-called United Provinces of the Netherlands was governed by synods – assemblies in which took part representatives of various local churches in the country. The shift towards Calvinism was a process, with different cities in the seven provinces changing their religion in different stages of the Revolt. Importantly, Amsterdam changed its main religion on 26 May 1578, in the so-called *Alteratie*. Consequently, the Catholic religion lost its position and was driven off the public life, marginalised into a minority.³

These existing Walloon communities were reinforced by a wave of Huguenots, i.e. French Calvinists, escaping from the persecution of the Catholic authorities of France in the late 1670s, early 1680s and especially after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, when between eighty and hundred and twenty thousand of them fled the country into the neighbouring Reformed states, in particular the United Provinces, Switzerland, some of the German States and England. Though the exact numbers of these migrants and refugees will remain forever unknown, they become a prominent minority in the Dutch milieu on different levels – as scholars, as theologians, as skilled craftsmen and also as those heavily relying on poor support. These newcomers not only joined existing Walloon communities, but also established new congregations. They also played an important role in promoting the French language and culture in the country.⁴

² Israel, *The Dutch Republic*.

³ Lenarduzzi, *Katholiek in de Republiek*.

⁴ Bolhius, “La Hollande et les deux refuges”; Green, *The Huguenot Jean Rou*.

Author's original version

Until 1578, there was one united synod for both the Walloon (French speaking churches) and the Dutch Reformed, who conducted their services in Dutch. In 1578, they were split into two separate administrative units, in order to facilitate their work in their own language, while still remaining united under the roof of the Dutch Reformed church. These synods were called roughly twice a year to discuss important events and requests made by individual churches. The meetings were conducted by a president and a secretary, who were elected the members of the synod. The cases discussed were registered in a special book, the *Livre synodal*, which are the source of exploration in this presentation. For the sake of my talk today, I selected several cases from the late 1670s, when the Catholic persecution of the Huguenots intensified and up to 1685, when the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was proclaimed by Louis XIV. The printed version of the *Livre synodal* lists synods divided by year into several sections: “actes”, including attestations, demands of rehabilitations, as well as other related subjects, such financial matters.⁵

Early Modern Privacy

Having briefly outlined the historical background for this study, let me introduce now the notions of early modern privacy and to discuss the ways in which they can be tackled in the sources. When thinking about the question of privacy, one immediately considers the human rights definition of it as the “right to be let alone”. Yet, was this really the case also in the early modern period? The biggest challenge lying before a historian of early modern privacy is the lack of clear definition of how the people at the time perceived it, and the lack of the word itself in most European languages with the exception of English. While the English language contains the word “privacy” already in the early modern time, others do not, and they do at best have words formed from the root “priv”, coming from the Latin *privatus*, signifying private. Therefore, at least some sort of working definition should be adopted that would allow the facilitation of the discussion of privacy, without being entirely anachronistic in our discussion, by implying that privacy in the past is the same as privacy nowadays.⁶

Stephen Margulis, while writing about contemporary privacy, defines it as regulation of access to a person – the man or a woman decides who has access

⁵ Posthumus-Meyjes and Bost, *Livre des Actes*, from here onwards abbreviated as LS.

⁶ Birkedal Bruun, “Towards an Approach”, 12–60.

Author's original version

to him or her, and the same goes towards a community, which can decide about access to itself.⁷ We can apply this basic definition also to the early modern context, albeit carefully, as of course not everyone could regulate access to oneself. While there is also no proper methodology that can be used specifically to access privacy, there are two tools proposed by Mette Birkedal Bruun from the Centre of Privacy Studies in Copenhagen, which can help with this task. The first tool is the textual analysis in attempt to find words that have the root *priv, which can work in Romanic and Germanic languages, but of course we will not find the word “privacy” itself. Yet one will find the “private” – such occasions need to be contextualised to see if it was perceived as a quality or a threat. Then one can look for words that hint at the notions of privacy, such as “intimate”, “secret”, “domestic” etc – all of these can also exist in privacy context, yet not necessarily so. Contextualisation will help us with this distinction. The second tool proposed is the so-called heuristic zones of privacy, which map the early modern world into 6 zones: mind/soul, body, chamber/bedchamber, house/household, community and state, going from the most to seemingly the least private. The zones do not exist separately, but also overlap each other, and instances of privacy can be seen within each of these spatial and mental zones, as well as in the places they interact with each other – thresholds. For example, what happens with community influences the life of a couple in their bedroom? What is the influence of the state on the life of a community, if certain religious practices are banned?⁸

I propose to expand these mostly spatial zones to the domain of personal relations of a person and add zones of “couple”, “parents and children”, “siblings”, “members of the household”, “friends”, “professional colleagues”, “acquaintances”, in order to also tackle privacy which exists between people in personal level.⁹

Having discussed notions and basic tools to engage with early modern privacy, why it is important to study the *Livres synodals* from the perspective of privacy? The answer is two-fold. On the one hand, this understudied source contains information about personal struggles of individuals, persecuted by the state, but also various personal issues related to their life in the community. On the other hand, the *Livre synodal* itself is written by a religious authority,

⁷ Margulis, “Privacy as a Social Issue”, 243–61.

⁸ Bruun, “Towards an Approach”.

⁹ Green et al., “The Low Countries, Privacy and Private Life”.

Author's original version

closely connected with political power, as in the case of the Reformed Churches in the United Provinces, they were benefiting from the privileged position and supported by the state. This combination allows us to see how individuals and community and state operated within the zones of privacy, or questions of privacy. From initial assessment of the published version of the *Livre synodal* it seems that although the instances in which privacy comes to the fore are not numerous, but nonetheless are very important and interesting.

Instances of Privacy in the Synodal Books

So let us now look at some specific cases, from the years 1677–1679, when the new wave of refugees has not yet reached the United Provinces, and the affairs in the Walloon Churches were running its more or less regular course. The first case is described during the synod which took place in Amsterdam, starting with 20 April 1678. What does this register include? There are twenty entries in total, most concerning a certain Henry Mouche, and his inheritance that he left for the use of the Walloon Church. Entry 3 concerns donations from the Walloon Churches to the Walloon Church of Leiden with the aim of having it sent to the persecuted Hungarian Reformed ministers, with a list of participating churches: Amsterdam, Heusden, Gouda, Goes, Delft, Brill, Dordrecht, Haarlem, The Hague, Rotterdam, Kampen, Middelburg, Sas van Gent, Leeuwarden, Breda, Leiden, Zierikzee, Utrecht, 's Hertogenbosch and Vlissingen (Flushing). This shows us the large number of the Walloon communities in the country, taking into consideration that not all the communities contributed money.¹⁰

Entry 4 discusses the acceptance of this gift by the Hungarian ministers. Entry 6 deals with a request to nominate a Walloon minister, in a letter written by Maurice of Nassau (1567-1625), Stadtholder and Prince of Orange, to a certain sieur La Lecq, governor of Sluis, where a new Walloon Church was established. Entry 7 deals with the fact that this is impossible at the moment.¹¹

¹⁰ LS, 807-808.

¹¹ LS, 808.

Author's original version

The entry that is relevant to our analysis is entry 10, from Middelburg, which is in fact a letter by Jacques Audebert de la Rouille, who wrote a complaint against the consistory of the city:¹²

It is with deep regret that I see myself compelled to pour out my heart in your bosom by the equally just and bitter complaints against the consistory of Middelburg, everyone can easily know with what assiduity I have worked to build this church during two years and a few months, it [the Church] declared it abundantly herself and by her deputies at various synods and by the testimony it gave me, written and signed by its pastors and her other important members, shortly before the death of Mr. Prevost.¹³

First as we see, De La Rouille establishes his credentials, and supports his integrity, justifying his claims by facts and documentation, referring to the prominent members of the community. Only then he discusses the issue itself:

... that first they paid me the salary which we had agreed upon in the midst of assembly, and returned at their request, [...] they gave me a reward proportionate to my expenses and my fatigue, but far from having accomplished either [of these two expenses, MG][.] For 7- or 8-months I have only received signs of harshness and ingratitude. It will soon be a year since they have been owing me 88 francs...¹⁴

It turns out that the issue that bothered De La Rouille was the insufficient payment and ingratitude of the Middelburg Walloon Church, which caused him obvious stress and discomfort. We also learn that he was working in the church as a pastor: he tells that he was working nights and days in public

¹² LS, 811–817.

¹³ LS, 811–817. All translations are mine, unless otherwise is noted. “C’est avec un sensible regret que ie me voy obligé à répandre mon cœur en vostre sein par les plaintes également iustes et ameres contre le consistoire de Middelbourg, chacun peut sçavoir aisement avec quelle assiduité i’ay travaillé à l’edification de cest’eglise l’espace de deux ans et de quelques mois, elle l’a déclaré assez elle mesme et par ses deputez à divers synodes et par le tesmoignage qu’elle m’en donna, escrit et signé de ses pasteurs et de ses autres principaux membres peu de temps avant le decez de Monsieur Prevost”.

¹⁴ “... que premierement ils me payassent le salaire dont nous estions convenus en pleine assemblee, et rendus à leur priere, [...] ils m’en donnassent une recompense proportionnée à mes depenses et à mes fatigues, mais bien loin d’avoir accompli l’un et l’autre ie n’en reçeu depuis 7 ou 8 mois que des marques de dureté et d’ingratitude. Il y aura bientost un an qu’ils me sont redevables de 88 francs...”.

Author's original version

catechisation, visiting the ill, and preached ordinary sermons. One day, having finished preaching an extraordinary sermon in the city of Middelburg, he had to hurry to the city gate, and even rent a postal carriage from his own money, in order to get to Vlissingen an hour later, where he was expected to work too. De La Rouille requests the synod to force the head of the church in Middelburg, Henri Du Moulin, a member of the renowned family of theologians, to ensure his salary is paid in full.¹⁵ Du Moulin received some money sent by the pastors of 's Hertogenbosch to be delivered to De La Rouille already in December 1677, but kept this money for over a month instead of paying him, until De La Rouille confronted him with this matter, with evidence that the money had been already delivered.



Fig. 1. Anonymous, *View on the Walloon Church in Middelburg*, print, 1696.

¹⁵ Henri Du Moulin was nominated pastor of Middleburg in 1664. It is important here to point out that the figure of Henri Du Moulin is related to the prominent Du Moulin family, his brother was Louis Du Moulin, a famous theologian, and he himself was preaching in Middleburg at the same period when Jean de Labadie was working there too, until 1669. See: Bolhius, "La Hollande et les deux refuges", 413; Pal, *Republic of Women*, 240; Gerlach, "Jean de Labadie à Middelbourg", 1–28; Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem*, 135–172 (referred to in: Milton, *Epistolarum*, 359). See Fig. 1 for a view of Middelburg around the time of the events.

His final complaint is about the fact that he was accused of a being responsible to the “defective exposition, which Mr. Pierre de Joncourt had made two or three days before of verse 3 of psalm”.¹⁶ [If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?].

While De La Rouille is furious about this false accusation, he at the same time clearly tried to clarify his own name, which is connected to known people of his time. Joncourt (1650-1720) was also a Huguenot refugee, just like De La Rouille, coming from Clermont. He got the position of pastor in Middelburg in 1678, the same year as this affair took place, and which he held until 1699, then changing positions to the Walloon Church in The Hague.¹⁷ De La Rouille himself is almost entirely absent from the archives and is only briefly mentioned in modern historiography, as the pastor of the Walloon Church in Dalem, between 1680 and 1692.¹⁸ No decisions are registered in the book, hence we do not what was decided in this matter.

Yet, what the reader discovers from this particular example is rather interesting from the privacy perspective. Unfortunately, we cannot use the terminological approach, as no words related to the root “priv” are found in the text. Yet, if to look through the prism of the heuristic zones of privacy, a rather detailed picture of the notions of privacy unfolds in front of our eyes. What is actually the story of this case? A man, of rather important standing within the Middelburg Walloon community complaints to the authorities of the Walloon Church in the United Provinces about unfair treatment and accuses the head of the community, Henri du Moulin of withholding his payment. In fact, we are witnessing how the community, in this case Middelburg, influences the individual, De La Rouille, who is suffering both morally and financially. Having waited for almost a year for the resolution of this problem from within, he decides to involve the main authorities of the Walloon Church in the country to look for a remedy. The important nuance here is that the Walloon Church as a community is under the patronage of the Dutch state, and by involving it, De LA Rouille in fact opens up his private

¹⁶ LS 813. “130 exposition defecteuses, celle que Mr. [Pierre] de Joncour[t] avoit faite deux ou trois jours auparavant du vers 3 du psaume 130”.

¹⁷ Joncourt was a prolific writer, publishing among others: *Lettre de plainte; Entretiens sur les différentes méthodes*.

¹⁸ Munier, *Het simultaneum in de Landen*, 234, 264.

Author's original version

affairs to the scrutiny, not only of the community but also of the state. Another element that plays a role here is the fact that the Walloon Church was interested in keeping its good image both in the eyes of the state, to continue enjoying its privileged position, as well as in the eyes of its own people, its members, in order not to lose the popular support. Hence, this private complaint of one of the community leaders is debated in the synod, which is supposed to take the just decision in this case. If to sum up, what was at stake in this case, was the individual and the community privacy in the eyes of the state and the individual members.

In order to elucidate my points on interpretation of instances related to privacy in this source, I would like to present my second case, which take place during the synod of Leiden, held on 9 February 1679. Item 2 of this synod concerns a “censure” (investigation or examination) of the allegations against the theologian David Huguenin, sent in a letter by the ministers of the Walloon Church of Leiden to the ministers of the French church in Wesel, German States.¹⁹ The story is rather scandalous, yet no details are given:

...there are charges against Monsr. Huguenin, *proposant*²⁰ in Theology, which while passing through our city he refused to defend himself against, although he had enough time, suffering from being confronted with a person who accuses him of very big scandals which are exploded in this city and which have come to the knowledge of our Church, of which, if guilty, he could not be edified in the church of God for the blessing of your church...²¹

¹⁹ LS, 826.

²⁰ According to the Catholic “Dictionnaire Universelle François et Latin”, vol. 4, 1137, “Proposant, se dit aussi de ceux qu’on examinw poue être reçus Ministres dans la Religion prétenduë Réformée. Lorsqu’ils soutiennent des Thèses de leur croyance, ils font la même chose que ceux qui soutiennent des Thèses pour être reçus Docteurs chez les Catholiques. Quand on leur écrit, on met sur les lettres: A Monsieur tel *Proposant* en Théologie” (Proposant [Proposer], is also said of those who are examined to be admitted as Ministers in the so-called Reformed Religion. When they defend theses of their belief, they do the same thing as those who defend theses to be received Doctors among Catholics. When one writes to them, one puts on the letters: To Monsieur this or that Proposant in Theology). Nowadays, he would have the title of a PhD student.

²¹ “...il y a des charges sur Monsr. Huguenin, *proposant* en Theologie, desquelles passant par nostre ville il a refusé de se defendre, quoy qu’il en eut suffisamment le temps, en souffrant d’estre confronté avec une personne qui l’accuse de très grandes scandales qui sont esclattée en cette ville et qui sont venus à la cognoissance de nostre eglise, desquels, s’il est

Author's original version

From this brief passage we learn that David Huguenin was accused by someone of great misdeeds, and which, even though he had the opportunity, he refused to refute, thus endangering his progression within the Walloon Church hierarchy and possibly his nomination to pastorate. David Huguenin is a very interesting figure, as unlike De La Rouille, he even was mentioned in the *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden* (Biographical dictionary of the Netherlands) compiled in the nineteenth century by Abraham Jacob Van der Aa. It gives some details about his life – he was born Neuchâtel, Switzerland, and he entered his religious service as field preacher in Holland, yet no proper biographical study on his has been ever conducted and therefore these details are scarce.²² Yet, the *Livre Synodal* mentions Huguenin on several occasions prior to this affair, which shows that he was a known figure to the participants of the synodal meetings. He is first mentioned in the synod of Middelburg, 21 April 1677, entry XV, as a recipient of a 31 guilders 10 stuivers given to him by the synod,²³ and the same sum appears once again in the notes of the synod held in Amsterdam 20 April 1678.²⁴

coupable, il ne pourroit estre en edification à l'esglise de Dieu pour la benediction de vostre esglise...”.

²² Van der Aa, “Huguenin (David)”, in *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden*, part 8, vol. 2, 1420–1421. Huguenin was the author of several works, including *Dissertatio de Dei; Christianus ratiocinans; Grammatica hebraica rationalis*.

²³ LS, 802.

²⁴ LS, 817.



Fig. 2. Abraham Beerstraten, *The Blue Gate in Leiden in the Winter*, oil on canvas, ca. 1635-1665. ©Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. Inv. num. SK-A-679

However, if we cross-reference this information with other sources contemporary, we discover that Huguenin's name comes forward already in the "Articles résolus au Synode des Eglises wallonnes de Provinces-Unies des Pas-Bas, assemblé à Utrecht le 12 de may et suivants 1677", paragraph 11, which tells that Huguenin demanded from the Synod in Utrecht to allow him to take the preparatory exam.²⁵ He was given 10 ducats for this. Then, on 19 April 1679, the Synod held in Leiden already mentions the accusations against him, without any further details. There is only a discussion of his "conduite" (conduct), the "bruits" (noise) in relation to him, and "the report of the accusations which have been brought against him and of the responses which he dictated with his own mouth and signed with his hand",²⁶ all of this eventually intended to ban him from taking any position in the French

²⁵ *Livre Synodal contenant les articles*, 763. Fig.2 illustrates the climate in Leiden at the time of the events.

²⁶ "le verbal des accusations qui on esté intentées contre luy et des responses qu'il a dictées de sa bouche et signées de sa main".

Author's original version

churches.²⁷ Once again the nature of these accusations remains unknown at this point.

Looking at the onset of this situation from the privacy perspective we see that the Synod is dealing with a request from fellow ministers to protect both itself and them from scandals and inappropriate behaviour of some of the potential pastors and consequently damage to their reputation. The advice that the Synod gave to the French church in Wesel was not to accept Huguenin as its pastor because of his poor behaviour, which though remains undetailed, was bad enough to ensure that he would be left out. If to turn back to Margulis's definition of privacy, what one can see here is how the Synod is asked to regulate the access to the Huguenot community, or in fact Synod being part of the community and its leading religious body regulated access to this community by banning certain people from becoming its part, and thus preventing negative image sticking to it. As mentioned in the first case of De Lar Rouille, the privileged position of the Reformed Church has had connection with the Dutch state, and as such would be scrutinised.

Yet, this recommendation of the Synod falls on deaf ears, as in the next entry, number 3 in the *Livre Synodal* we find the "censure" (examination/investigation), in which the ministers from Wesel defend Huguenin and tell the Synod that they are perfectly content with him and his knowledge.²⁸ Still, no reference to the detailed reasons for the whole commotion is made.

It is only in entry 4 that we learn the nature of the accusation against Huguenin and the name of his accuser.²⁹ They are brought against his conduct by Marie Cepen, a servant of a certain Mr. Biel. Although the first name is not mentioned, we can assume that this even took place at the house of Theodore Biel, minister at the Walloon Church of Leiden.³⁰ This accusation is announced to Huguenin in Leiden, in the presence of 5 ministers representing the Walloon church of Wesel and elders.³¹ Huguenin demanded that the confrontation in this case would be heard in front of the consistory of Wesel. The lady is said to have little understanding of French, being part of the

²⁷ *Livre Synodal contenant les articles*, 778.

²⁸ LS, 826.

²⁹ LS, 826–829.

³⁰ He was called to his job in Leiden from Wesel on 5 February 1670, died on 9 May 1700. See: *Orde, volgens welke de feest- en lijdensteksten*, 140; *Bulletin de la Commission*, 62.

³¹ "Livre Synodal contenant les articles résolus", 8, article 17.

Author's original version

Flemish, hence Dutch-speaking congregation. Let us look at the accusations brought against him in more detail. Marie Cepon accused Huguenin of the following deeds:³²

1. Using bad language and demanding luxury, i.e. that he would be served black puddings, and when he found these to be flaccid and break, he demanded stronger ones. Huguenin replied that he could not recall it.

2. She claimed that while she was holding a plate of soup in his chamber, “he put his hand under her skirts, [so that] she fled into the kitchen where he followed her, but because she did not feel safe there she ran to the cellar where he followed her, but she told him to hold back his hands, and that if he did not stop, he was doing a diabolical affair and that she would complain to her master”.³³ He once again denied accusations saying he did not remember it and he was not capable of doing it.

3. While being in the kitchen, Huguenin held his penis in his hand in the kitchen, and called her two or three times by name: “Marie, Marie”, and showed her his shameful parts, which made her horrified. He responded that it was completely false and it was “diaboliquement faux” (diabolically false).

4. On another occasion, Huguenin asked her where she slept and went upstairs with her – she pushed him down the stairs. He replied once again that he had no memory of it.

5. Another time, while Mr. and Mrs. Biel were asleep, Cepon was cleaning the kitchen, and Huguenin came half an hour later to look for her and asked if they were asleep, he took her by the head and kissed her, and she pushed him away saying that it was honourable to his profession.³⁴ He refuted her claim by

³² LS, 827–828.

³³ LS, 827–828. “il luy mis la main sous les iuppes, qu’elle s’en est fuyee dans la cuisine où il la suivit, mais que ne s’y trouvant pas assurée qu’elle courut à la cave où il la suivit, mais quelle luy dit qu’il retint ses mains, et que s’il ne s’arrestoient point, il faisoit une affaire diabolique et qu’elle s’en plaindroit à son maitre”.

³⁴ Theodore Biel’s wife’s name was Alida Snellen and they signed their married contract on 8 May 1674. Other signature on the document were by Laurens van Sonnegem and Emmerentia Berck, widow of Christaen Snellen (probably bride’s mother), and Glaudij de Jongh. Regional Archives Dordrecht, access number 20 Notariële archieven van Dordrecht, inv. num. 323, “Huwelijkse Voorwaarden”, f. 209–210. See Fig. 3 below. The name of Biel is spelt as “Bijl”. Unfortunately it was not possible to identify his date of birth.

Author's original version

saying that he went to the kitchen without knowing she was there, but she did not refuse his kiss.

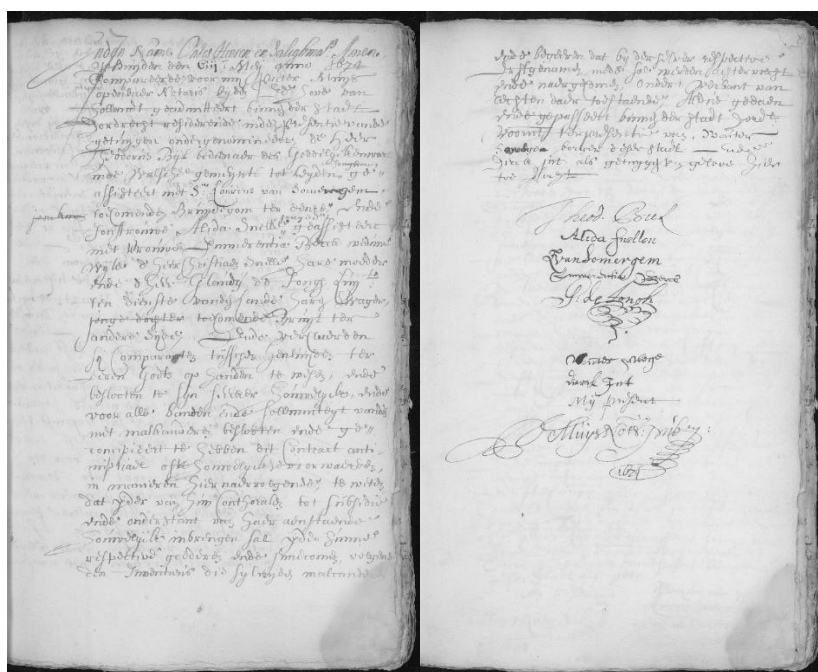


Fig. 3. Regional Archives Dordrecht, access number 20 Notariële archieven van Dordrecht, inv. num. 323, “Huwelijkse Voorwaarden” (Marriage agreement), f. 209r, 210r.

6. Huguenin often solicited her with immodesty, also on a given evening when the Biel's were dining in the city. She reported that he prayed her not to tell them about his attempts.

7. When Biel's were in Brill, Cepon found herself alone in the house with Huguenin and a little girl who slept with her, he hit her foot and demanded beer. Having brought him the beer, he was sitting at the foot of the bed, lifted himself up, he held her from behind and threw her at the plank, throwing his body at the same time over hers. To protect herself she held his hair, and eventually managed to escape. The next day he accused her of hitting him. Huguenin replied to this accusation that she could have raised alarm if this happened, and at the same time accused her of spying on him, trying to go to his room to see what he was reading. The event described by her was according

Author's original version

to him an accident in which he felt sudden pain and tried to hold her to avoid falling, but eventually causing them both to fall.

8. Cepon accused Huguenin also that the Sunday after the aforementioned event, he asked her as to why she did not attend his sermon, to which she replied that she would not want to listen to a sermon by a man who tried to do a horrible thing to her the previous Saturday.

The accusations that Cepon points at Huguenin above are not simple misconduct, he attempted to rape her and touch her on numerous occasions, leaving her helpless and scared. It is not clear whether she reported him to the masters of the house, but probably so and this is how the matter reached the Synod. Here it is important to stress that in the early modern period the house was playing an important role as one of the more private zones. It was seen as a place of security and safety, as can be seen in the egodocument of Isaac de Pinto, written around the same time.³⁵ At the same time, the servants at the time were often finding themselves abused by their masters, and had little protection if at all.³⁶ As such, the house, although a safe haven for some, could be a very unsafe place for others.

What did the Synod have to say to these horrendous accusations of Huguenin? The judgement of the Synod is found in point 5 and dates 27 February 1679.³⁷ Despite the testimony of Cepon, the Synod decided that the repentance of Huguenin sufficient to declare this matter as closed, since he did not admit or did not remember any of these deeds:

We tell you, gentlemen and very honored brothers, that the exterior testimonies of a deep repentance that he [Huguenin] gave us having asked forgiveness on both knees from Mr. Biel, our dear colleague, and from us, and having conjured by the compassion of God to be willing to ask for him in our private prayers the regenerating and sanctifying spirit, we declare that we are satisfied with regard to the

³⁵ For the analysis of this egodocument, see: Green, "Privacy in Jewish Egodocuments". See also: Green, "Spaces of Privacy", 60.

³⁶ Van der Heijden, "Women as Victims", 623–644; Mansell, "Beyond the Home", 24–49.

³⁷ LS, 829-830.

Author's original version

facts which he has confessed and confirmed by the aforesaid testimonies of his repentance.³⁸

The Synod sees in Huguenin's repentance on his knees sufficient ground to accept it. Yet, the ministers of Wesel do not give up on the idea of hiring him. In point 6, in a letter sent by the ministers of Wesel to the Synod on 18 April 1679, they requested their colleagues at the synod to give them attestation for Huguenin, for his services conducted for the church. In point 7 this attestation is refused on the ground of the process verbal in Leiden.³⁹

The Wesel party did not accept this, and probably contacted the Baron of Spaen, with a request to write a letter to the Synod to ask their understanding on behalf of Huguenin. It is likely that the reference here is to Alexander, baron Spaen van Cruisfort (1619-1692), who in 1675 was appointed to the governor of Wesel by Friedrich Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg. But even this did not help Huguenin's case. This letter did not survive, but point 8 in the *Livre synodal* is a response to this lost letter, in which the synodal judgement is confirmed. They state that Huguenin was a repeating sinner, who was accused of such conduct not only in Leiden but also in other instances, for example in trickery and impudence in Utrecht, and therefore ask the baron to forgive them for rejecting such a man despite all of his positive qualities from their body. He was declared unsuitable to be part of any church under the jurisdiction of the Dutch synod.⁴⁰ The Synod was determined not to allow a person such as Huguenin to be part of their community.

Yet, this is not the end of this affair. Two years later, it returns into the *Livre Synodal*, specifically in the notes of the Synod held on 17 September 1681 and the following days in Dordrecht. Point 19 is a letter sent on 13 September 1681 from Wesel by several dignitaries, including Johannes Hinsen, burgomaster of the city.⁴¹ Johannes Hinsen from Wesel, aged 20, therefore born in 1629 is

³⁸ "Nous vous disons, Messieurs et très honorés frères, que les témoignages extérieurs d'une profonde repentance qu'il [Huguenin] nous a donnés ayant demandé pardon à deux genoux à Mr. Biel, nostre cher collègue, et à nous, et nous ayant coniuerez par les compassions de Dieu de vouloir demander dans nos prières particulières pour luy l'esprit regenerant et sanctifiant, nous declarons que nous sommes satisfaits pour le regard des faits qu'il a avouez et confirmez par les témoignages susdits de sa repentance".

³⁹ LS, 830–831.

⁴⁰ LS, 831–832.

⁴¹ LS, 864–865.

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found among the students of the University of Leiden.⁴² Having spent some time in the city, he might have had personal connections with the Reformed ministers of the city. Together, they demand rehabilitation of David Huguenin, on the base of their own investigation of the accusation against him, and the fact that he had been already preaching in their church for three months, and even more so that he was elected to be part of them. They claim that Huguenin showed himself from his best side and fulfilled all demands, received all positive opinions of his academic institutions and synods of Cleves, Berg and Juliers, he is esteemed for his “doctrine and the purity of his preaching, only by chastity, sobriety, charity”.⁴³ Indeed, it seems that despite this letter sent by the ministers from Leiden, he did gain a position in the French church in Wesel, and in 1699 he became there professor of theology and in 1720 even converted to Catholicism.⁴⁴ An attestation of Huguenin’s good behaviour was attached as point 20, signed by ministers from Wesel. From point 21, we learn that the ban on his vocation was lifted by the synod.

Concluding remarks

In this article, the subject of privacy is tackled from the perspective of the Huguenot community in the United Provinces and Germany, based on two notable examples of a minister, who was part of the community in Middelburg and of a *proposant* who aimed at obtaining a place as a minister in the community of Wesel. Both examples showed that the *Livre synodal* proves to be an important source when it comes to examination of privacy. This is visible from two dimensions. First of all, individuals appeal to the Synod with their private problems, as such giving up their privacy and making intimate details public, or at least known to the community elders, in order to get satisfaction of their complaints. Both De La Rouille and Marie Cepon petitioned the Synod, exposing inappropriate behaviour of other members of

⁴² “Dec. 11. Johannes Hinsen Vesalia-Clivensis. 20, J.”, as stated in *Album studiosorum*, 401.

⁴³ LS, 864. “doctrine et la pureté de ses predications, que par la chasteté, la sobriété, la charité”.

⁴⁴ According to Francesco Trevisani, Huguenin became professor of Theology already in 1689. See Trevisani, *Descartes in Deutschland*, 183, n. 20. It does seem highly improbable, especially since Trevisani lists his dates of life as 1675–1705 in the same note, meaning he would be just four years old when the affair we discuss here emerged and aged fourteen, when he would become professor.

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the community, which, if known to the authorities and the general public could cast a shade on the reputation of the whole community.

As the analysis above showed, the members of the Synod in their turn were concerned with the reputation of the community as one of their first priorities, as its position depended on the favour of the state authorities and popular support. From the documents preserved, it is clear that they were the gate-keepers that regulated access to the community. Especially in the case of Huguenin, the Synod made considerable effort to keep the man being accused of serious moral offences out of the community and to prevent him from obtaining any position within it. Nonetheless, these efforts proved to be fruitless, as he did get a position after all.

This pilot study shows that the *Livre synodal* is an important source to functionality of the Huguenot community, and a key to the understanding of how this religious congregation perceived and practiced privacy. Therefore, additional research is required into the other cases presented in the book, in order to create a comprehensive picture of this early modern phenomenon.

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